

## **Community Testing Programme for COVID-19 for Pregnant Women to end tomorrow**

The Home Affairs Department (HAD), in partnership with the Board of Directors of Yan Chai Hospital (YCHB), launched the Community Testing Programme for COVID-19 for Pregnant Women earlier to provide a voluntary one-off free virus testing service for pregnant women. The Programme was extended to August 29 after a trial of about one week. As the demand from pregnant women for the Testing Programme in the past week has significantly dropped, the HAD announced today (August 21) that the Programme will end earlier tomorrow (August 22).

As of yesterday (August 20), a total of 559 pregnant women had collected the sampling kits under the Programme and 493 specimens had been collected. The testing agency, Sunrise Diagnostic Centre Limited, has conducted tests on 488 specimens and none of them tested positive. The testing agency will issue a report of the test result to each pregnant woman upon request to facilitate their admission to hospital or their delivery arrangements. YCHB will send the reports to the participants by mail.

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## **Universal Community Testing Programme to be launched on September 1**

To identify as early as possible asymptomatic COVID-19 patients in the community and achieve the target of early identification, early isolation and early treatment to cut the community transmission chain, a spokesman for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government said today (August 21) that the Government will launch the Universal Community Testing Programme (UCTP) on September 1 to provide a one-off free testing service for members of the public. The UCTP is scheduled to run for seven days. Subject to actual progress, it may be extended for no more than seven days.

"Except for children under 6 years old and people not suitable for the test, all holders of valid Hong Kong identity cards or birth certificates who are asymptomatic can participate in the programme on a voluntary basis," the spokesman said.

"The Government will set up community testing centres in all districts across the territory. Appropriate infection control and social distancing measures will be put in place at the centres in accordance with the

recommendations of the Department of Health. Members of the public can make an appointment online by providing their personal particulars and choosing the testing location and time slot. Booking arrangements and other details will be announced in due course.

"Specimens will be collected by trained medical or healthcare staff. They will collect the combined nasal and throat swabs of participants for laboratory testing. People whose test results are negative will be informed by SMS through their mobile phones. If a test result is positive, the Department of Health will take follow-up action immediately."

The spokesman stressed that the UCTP will only do testing for COVID-19. All testing will be conducted in Hong Kong. Specimens will not be transported outside Hong Kong and they will be destroyed after testing.

"We will handle the personal data of members of the public very carefully. No personal particulars will be indicated on the sampling bottles of the programme. The testing agencies will know only the serial numbers but not the identities of specimen owners. Moreover, no personal information (including specimens and test results) will be transported outside Hong Kong. The workflow also does not involve the provision of any personal data to any organisations or persons outside Hong Kong. Information of individual cases with positive results will be passed to the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority for follow-up. Personal Information and test results of other cases will be deleted after completion of the programme. Specimens will also be destroyed after completion of the programme."

Laboratory testing and surveillance are important elements in the Government's anti-epidemic work. The spokesman appealed to members of the public to fight the virus together and join the UCTP for the sake of their health and that of their families, with a view to winning the battle against the virus as soon as possible.

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## **CHP investigates 27 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 0.00am, August 21, the CHP was investigating 27 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 4 632 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 4 631 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, nine had a travel history during the incubation period.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)).

In view of the severe epidemic situation, the CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. As a number of recent cases involve elderly people, the CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link [wa.me/85296171823?text=hi](https://wa.me/85296171823?text=hi), they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose

or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;

- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

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## **AFCD to provide basic and limited public services and close public facilities starting next week**

â€œIn the light of special work arrangements for government departments and the latest development of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) announced today (August 21) that starting from Monday (August 24), licensing services and reception counters at Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices and the Marine Parks Office at CDW Building, 388 Castle Peak Road, Tsuen Wan, will provide basic and limited public services to members of the public. Relevant services will be provided on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 9.30am to noon and 2pm to 5pm, until further notice.

The AFCD appeals to the public to use the above counter services only when in urgent need. Members of the public are encouraged to handle their licence or permit applications through email, post or fax. Relevant documents can also be put in the drop-in box at the ground floor of Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices. For detailed information and contacts, please refer to the AFCD website: [www.afcd.gov.hk](http://www.afcd.gov.hk).

Moreover, the anti-rabies dog inoculation and dog licensing services at the Animal Management Centres under the AFCD, except the New Territories

South Animal Management Centre which has been launched as another quarantine facility for pet animals related to COVID-19 cases, will be provided on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 9.30am to noon and 2pm to 4.30pm, whereas all other anti-rabies dog inoculation and licensing centres will remain closed until further notice. For details, please visit the designated website: [www.pets.gov.hk](http://www.pets.gov.hk).

Meanwhile, AFCD public facilities, including the Hong Kong Wetland Park, eight Country Park Visitor/Education Centres, seven Hong Kong Geopark Park Visitor Centres, the Endangered Species Resources Centre and all country park barbecue sites and campsites will remain closed. School and public programmes will remain suspended until further notice.

For enquiries, please call the AFCD on 2708 8885.

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## Ensuring a stable supply of personal protective equipment

The Government today (August 21) issued a report on the concerted efforts of the Government and the community in ensuring a stable supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the fight against COVID-19.

"The Government has been making continuous efforts to procure and stock up on PPE to protect staff and meet operational needs in the provision of public services. At the outset of the outbreak, there was strong global competition for the supply of PPE and the shortage problem was acute. Thanks to the concerted efforts of the parties involved, supply and stock levels have stabilised," a Government spokesperson said.

"In view of the relatively stable supply and stock situation of PPE, and for the sake of transparency, we consider it timely to release information on our procurement, stock and distribution of PPE at the current juncture.

"The Government will continue to use PPE prudently, share the items with the needy in the community and help all to fight the virus together," the spokesperson said.

The report summarises the multi-pronged approach to strengthen government procurement, efforts devoted to supporting frontline medical staff, ways to enhance local PPE supply, and efforts made to meet urgent community needs in terms of PPE. Details are presented in the report (see Annex). The report has also been submitted to the Legislative Council.